



DAVID SANDERS, Ph.D.
Director

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
425 Shatto Place -- Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

Board of Supervisors

GLORIA MOLINA
First District

YVONNE B. BURKE
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

August 19, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director



**MAY 17, 2005 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #2 re: LENGTHS-OF-STAY AT EMERGENCY
RESPONSE COMMAND POST**

INTRODUCTION

On May 17, 2005, the Board instructed the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to:

- Report back to the Board within seven (7) days on immediate steps taken to address Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP) "overstays", including increasing the availability of emergency shelter beds;
- Provide monthly reports for the next year, which track the numbers of emergency shelter beds and the length of time children spend waiting for placement;
- Provide a 30-day report regarding possible short-term and long-term solutions, with attention to placement needs of the more difficult-to-place children and youth;
- Work in collaboration with the Association of Community Human Services Agencies (ACHSA) and group homes on the assessment of placement processes to identify and resolve barriers to successful placement of these youths.

On May 24, 2005, DCFS submitted its 7-day report to the Board. On June 23, 2005, DCFS submitted its 30-day progress report to the Board regarding the development of short-term and long-term solutions as well as regarding its collaboration with ACHSA. Beginning on June 23, 2005, DCFS has issued statistical reports to the Board on a monthly basis regarding lengths-of-stay at ERCP. This is to provide your Board with an additional progress report regarding possible short-term and long-term solutions to Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP) lengths-of-stay, with attention to placement needs of the more difficult-to-place children and youth.

SCOPE OF PROBLEM

Most often, the population of children described in the ERCP lengths-of-stay reports are "difficult-to-place" children with current behaviors that present serious risks to their health and safety, such as, violent interactions with others, illegal drug consumption, gang involvement, or chronic runaway episodes. This population also includes parenting teenagers and dependent children over the age of 18 years who do not meet the licensing provisions for residence in our emergency shelters.

The safe and stable placement of children requiring out-of-home care is a core value of DCFS. In collaboration with public and private community partners, DCFS is engaged in a series of activities that support recruitment of placement resources for children and youth who present special placement challenges. What follows are some examples of extremely challenging situations in which, although ERCP stays were extended, DCFS embraced the youth and exerted exceptional efforts to ensure the youth's well-being:

- (1) A bright young man, nearing his eighteenth birthday, arrived at ERCP in the middle of the night, expatriated from a foreign country and speaking only his native language. This youth had no previous history with DCFS. Prior to his arrival, having been abandoned by his mother, this youth had been homeless for years on the streets of his country of origin. His father's whereabouts were unknown. Despite all efforts, DCFS was unable to locate any relatives with whom to place the youth; and the youth adamantly refused to be placed in a foster home of any ethnicity other than of Caucasian or his own native decent.
- (2) A fifteen-year-old male was transported to ERCP at approximately 10:00 P.M. following his release from Juvenile Hall. The release was the result of the District Attorney's Office's decision against charging the youth with murder.
- (3) A fourteen-year-old male, previously known to ERCP, who abuses substances, is defiant, and frequently steals from his placement prior to running away, arrived at the ERCP during late hours. He reported to ERCP staff his definite plan not to remain in any placement for extended periods of time in spite of extensive stabilization efforts by his case-carrying Children's Social Worker and by ERCP staff.

On May 5, 2005, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Community Care Licensing Division (CCL) cited DCFS for operating an unlicensed facility at its ERCP. The Department clearly acknowledges that a percentage of children and youth have continued to stay at ERCP in excess of the departmentally-imposed standard of measurement of four hours and beyond. DCFS continues to work diligently to develop resolution to the issue. We are collaborating with CCL by sharing our monthly statistical records; and their management staff has accepted the invitation to participate in the DCFS/ACHSA program development groups further detailed under "long-term solutions" below.

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

As previously shared with you, DCFS has conducted four (4) orientation meetings on May 17, May 18, June 28 and June 29, 2005. These meetings were to recruit licensed foster parents interested in contracting with the Emergency Shelter Care (ESC) program by providing 24/7 emergency shelter care foster homes for male and female teenagers, 13 to 17 years of age. Over 100 interested participants attended the meetings. At the orientation meetings, DCFS discussed the ESC Program and support systems that will be available for foster parents who accept teenagers. Representatives from the Office of the Medical Director, ERCP, Out-of-Home Care Management, the Contracts Division, Community Care Licensing, and Department of Mental Health attended the May 17 and May 18 meetings.

Additional short-term solution steps taken and progress made, to date, include:

- (1) DCFS placed Resource Utilization Management (RUM) staff on-call, beginning Thursdays at 5:00 P.M. through Mondays at 2:00 A.M., to assist ERCP in locating and matching placements for difficult-to-place youth.
- (2) DCFS published advertisements for the recruitment of licensed foster parents in the following newspapers: The Los Angeles Times, La Opinion, The Los Angeles Watts Times, The Sentinel, The Daily News, The Long Beach Press Telegram and The San Gabriel Valley News.
- (3) DCFS added two (2) additional contracted shelter care homes for adolescents with behavioral problems. Each home is licensed for two adolescents, for a total of four (4) additional beds.
- (4) DCFS forwarded letters to all Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) requesting their interest and availability for placements on a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week basis. To date, nineteen (19) FFAs indicated that they are available for placements.
- (5) DCFS continues to explore with group home providers the development of four (4) to six (6) emergency shelter care beds for males, 13 to 17 years of age. Beginning June 27, 2005, David and Margaret Group Home began providing ten (10) 24/7 emergency assessment beds for teenage females, 13 to 17 years of age; and has been successful in accepting and maintaining some of our most difficult-to-place youths. Additionally, Girls and Boys Town provides sixteen (16) emergency shelter

care assessment beds for males, 9 to 17 years of age; and twelve (12) emergency shelter care assessment beds for females, 11 to 17 years of age.

With the expansion of licensed foster home beds, FFA beds and Group Home beds as detailed above, we believe that we have sufficient capacity to assure that few, if any children, await placement at ERCP for longer than eight (8) hours. Coupled with the long-term solutions that follow, which are intended to provide the necessary continued service expansion and management improvements, we believe we are able to further reduce the length-of-stay for youth at ERCP.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

I have recently appointed new management at ERCP, including a Deputy Director and a Regional Administrator, both of whom have many years of line and management experience. Both are eager to address this issue and are actively meeting with community partners, line staff and managers, as well as with staff of other County departments to address and seek solutions to the emergency placements of our youth.

Furthermore, the Department continues in its efforts with the Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA) to further develop long-term shelter solutions for the more challenging population of youth who await placement at ERCP for extended lengths of time. In addition to the Department's aggressive efforts to recruit and contract with licensed foster parents for the provision of Emergency Shelter Care, three DCFS/ACHSA program development groups, the "Individualized Contracting", "Development of Crisis Beds" and "Intake Receiving Centers" workgroups have developed and presented DCFS with proposals. Unfortunately, Hollygrove Treatment Center, one of the member agencies, will be terminating its residential program in September 2005. Therefore, planning for an assessment/shelter program with this agency is no longer a viable option. I will include information related to additional discussions and decisions in future reports to your Board.

Additional long-term solution steps taken and progress made, to date, include:

- (1) DCFS staff and I have met with representatives of SEIU Local 535 to expand input and consider workplace-related perspectives as solutions are proposed.
- (2) DCFS is working with the Probation Department to develop a plan to utilize some of the placement facilities with which Probation contracts so that this support can be enlisted when a youth, whose treatment needs can best be serviced by those agencies, enters the ERCP.
- (3) DCFS, in collaboration with the Departments of Mental Health, Probation, the Chief Administrative Office, the Commission for Children and Families and other stakeholders, is currently developing long-term placement resources for the chronically mentally-ill homeless youths, 18 to 21 years of age. It is anticipated that DCFS will release a request for proposals in August 2005, for twenty (20) emergency shelter beds for young adults, 18 to 21 years of age.

Each Supervisor
August 19, 2005
Page 5

SUMMARY

The Department appreciates the attention and emphasis provided by the Board of Supervisors in addressing this very serious issue. DCFS continues to aggressively pursue corrective actions that support short-term and long-term positive movement in reducing the ERCP length-of-stay.

The attached chart provides you with the monthly tracking for 136 children who had ERCP contact in July 2005. This chart describes the length of time children stayed at ERCP, delineated by relevant demographics. It should be noted that, although there were 136 children who came through ERCP, 90 children (66%) were placed in less than 4 hours; and 31 children (22%) were placed within 4 and 10 hours. Only 15 children out of 136 (12%), awaited placement at ERCP beyond 10 hours. We believe that we are working in the right direction as we are making tremendous progress toward reducing the length-of-stay for children at ERCP.

I look forward to reporting back to your Board within 90 days as to our continued progress. Should you have further questions, please call me at (213) 351-5600, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

DS:AW:JL:eaf

c: County Counsel
Chief Administrative Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Attachment

EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMAND POST'S MONTHLY OVERSTAY REPORT – MINORS AT ERCP JULY 2005

The following is an overall breakdown of the number of children serviced at the Emergency Response Command Post. Of the 136 (100%) children serviced by ERCP, 90 (66%) were placed within four hours and 120 children (88%) were placed within eight hours. However, forty-six (34%) of the 136 children exceeded the four hour time frame (see table #1 below).

Numbers of children and youth who stayed 4 hours and longer by age:
Total: 46 (34%)

Hours	0-10 years	11-14 years	15-18 years	19 and over	TOTALS	
0 to 4	33	28	29	0	90	66%
4 to 8	4	11	15	0	30	22%
9 to 13	1	3	5	0	9	7%
14 to 19	2	3	2	0	7	5%
20 to 23	0	0	0	0	0	-
24 to 28	0	0	0	0	0	-
29 to 32	0	0	0	0	0	-
33 and over	0	0	0	0	0	-
TOTALS	40 (29%)	45 (33%)	51 (38%)	0	136	100%

Children and youth's placement type prior to stay at ERCP:

Placement	0-10 years	11-14 years	15-18 years	19 and over	TOTALS	
Home of parent	5	9	5	0	19	41%
Adoptive parent	0	0	0	0	0	-
Home of Relative	1	3	1	0	5	11%
Foster Home	1	1	6	0	8	17%
Group Home	0	0	1	0	1	2%
AWOL	0	0	5	0	5	11%
Hospital	0	0	0	0	0	-
Probation	0	2	2	0	4	9%
Law Enforcement	0	2	2	0	4	9%
TOTALS	7 (15%)	17 (37%)	22 (48%)	0	46	100%

Numbers of Children and Youth who came to ERCP by age and Gender:
Total: 136

0-10 years		11-14 years		15-18 years		19 and over	
40 (29%)		45 (33%)		51 (38%)		-	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
25	15	24	21	24	27	0	0

Children and Youth's placement type following their stay at ERCP:

Placement	0-10 years	11-14 years	15-18 years	19 and over	TOTALS	
Home of Parent	2	1	0	0	3	7%
Home of Relative	1	0	0	0	1	2%
Foster Home	3	11	8	0	22	48%
Group Home	1	5	12	0	18	39%
AWOL	0	0	1	0	1	2%
Hospital	0	0	1	0	1	2%
Probation	0	0	0	0	0	-
TOTALS	7 (15%)	17 (37%)	22 (48%)	0	46	100%